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Women in the Galleries: New Angles on Old Masters in the Late Nineteenth Century

Meaghan Clarke

Art history as a discipline, it might be believed, was constructed by men. The portrait frontispieces for essays in a volume titled *The Books that Shaped Art History* (2013) are almost entirely male. It is not until the 1980s that two interlopers, Rosalind Krauss and Svetlana Alpers, appear. Art history began for many undergraduates with a survey text, such as H. W. Janson's *History of Art* (1962), and extended back in an Alfred Barr-like timeline of great male art historians — the books were all written by men. There were scholars who questioned this construction of art history. Linda Nochlin asked in 1971, 'Why have there been no great women artists?' and Claire Richter Sherman and Adele Holcomb's groundbreaking *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts* was published a decade later.¹ The task of finding women's art writing does pose significant challenges. There are gaps and absences. For a start many women wrote articles, not books. Some are easily identifiable while others require considerable effort to uncover their pseudonymous or anonymous identity. However, indexing and digitization projects have made this kind of archaeological archive work much more feasible.² There is now a substantial body of scholarship on women art writers in the nineteenth century which has opened up exciting new possibilities for research. Evidence indicates that women were very present in art galleries in the nineteenth century and recent scholarship has turned to the question of what women actually did in them. This article will take the art gallery as its focus. It will explore the particularity of museum spaces in which women worked on old masters and the forms the work took. I will take two galleries as case studies: the National Gallery, London and the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

¹ *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts, 1820–1979*, ed. by Claire Richter Sherman and Adele M. Holcomb (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981).

² These have included digitized periodical and newspaper collections (Nineteenth Century British Library Newspapers, Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals, British Periodicals), digital libraries (Internet Archive (a non-profit library), HathiTrust Digital Library), and more specific projects such as the Burlington Magazine Online Index, <<https://www.burlington.org.uk/archive/search-archive>> [accessed 25 April 2019].

The mid-Victorian fascination with old masters explored in the recent National Gallery exhibition ‘Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites’ (2017–18) re-emerged at the end of the century.³ The study of the early Renaissance in Italian painting was advocated by a group of writers and considerable scholarship has been devoted to the best known, Roger Fry and Bernard Berenson.⁴ This article asks how and where women in this circle foregrounded analysis of historical techniques. Art writers discussed will include Julia Cartwright (1851–1924), Vernon Lee (1856–1935), and the writer and artist Christiana Herringham (1852–1929). I will argue that gallery spaces were a nexus for the development of expertise on early Renaissance techniques and their dissemination. The involvement of women in not just art writing, but exhibitions of ‘masterpieces’, offers insight into the shaping of art history at the *fin de siècle*.

The National Gallery

The location in the National Gallery of the 2017 conference on ‘Nineteenth-Century Women Writers on the Old Masters’ that was the catalyst for this issue of *19* demanded an exploration of the gallery as a prime space for the study of women and old masters.⁵ Tissot’s well-known painting *London Visitors* (c. 1874) documents the presence of women at the entrance, but there is also evidence of women inside. Just as the Reading Room of the British Museum facilitated the work of literary women, the National Gallery was a shared physical workspace for women art writers.⁶ Several women frequented the rooms quite regularly, as exemplified by Julia Cartwright’s 1885 diary entry: ‘Went to the National Gallery. Consoled myself as usual with the pictures. Raphael and the dear Botticellis.’⁷ The diaries of Cartwright

³ On Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites see also, Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

⁴ Caroline Elam, “A more and more important work”: Roger Fry and The Burlington Magazine’, *Burlington Magazine*, 145 (2003), 142–52; *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry’s Vision of Art*, ed. by Christopher Green (London: Merrell Holberton in association with the Courtauld Gallery, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1999); Rachel Cohen, *Bernard Berenson: A Life in the Picture Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); *Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage*, ed. by Joseph Connors and Louis A. Waldman, Villa I Tatti Series, 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁵ I am extremely grateful to Hilary Fraser, Susanna Avery-Quash, and Maria Alambritis for their wonderful insights and assistance as well as readers, fellow speakers, and delegates.

⁶ Susan David Bernstein, ‘Reading Room Geographies of Late-Victorian London: The British Museum, Bloomsbury and the People’s Palace, Mile End’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13 (2012) <<https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.632>>.

⁷ *A Bright Remembrance: The Diaries of Julia Cartwright 1851–1924*, ed. by Angela Emanuel (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 144.

are extraordinarily illuminating because they give insight into not only her relationship with Berenson (she was a vital contact for him in London), but also the circle of women meeting in the National Gallery. In fact, the gallery served as a locus for the later generation of female connoisseurs already mentioned. In Cartwright's diary of 1893 she wrote:

To the North Gallery, where I sat before the 'Ansidei Madonna' [Fig. 1], til Vernon Lee appeared. Berenson had to leave last night [...]. Vernon Lee examined the Holbein skull [Fig. 2] and had been seeing the Holbein drawings at Windsor and calls them ingenious but not *great* art and thinks him devoid of the feeling for form the great Italians had. I made her look at the Signorelli which she likes as well as I. (*A Bright Remembrance*, ed. by Emanuel, p. 179, emphasis in original)

Cartwright and Lee shared their knowledge of objects and collections and their practice was professional, moving between collections and 'examining' drawings.⁸ It is most likely they turned to consider *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (c. 1496) and *The Circumcision* (c. 1490–91). Both works by Luca Signorelli entered the collection in 1882, and his fresco *The Triumph of Chastity: Love Disarmed and Bound* (c. 1509) was acquired in 1874.⁹ Cartwright had already discussed Signorelli in her own work and it was another member of their circle, Maud Cruttwell (1860–1939), who would publish a book on Signorelli in 1899.¹⁰

In the nineteenth century women were often stereotyped as overly emotional or superficial visitors in museums, while men were represented as objective observers.¹¹ Helen Rees Leahy has recently analysed modes of female spectatorship in museums in this period and recalibrated assumptions about how women viewed art. She argues that women could be active

⁸ Raphael, *The Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Nicholas of Bari* ('The Ansidei Madonna'), 1505, oil on poplar, 216.8 × 147.6 cm, National Gallery, London; Hans Holbein the Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ('The Ambassadors'), 1533, oil on oak, 207 × 209.5 cm, National Gallery, London.

⁹ Luca Signorelli, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1496, oil on wood, 215 × 170.2 cm, National Gallery; Luca Signorelli, *The Circumcision*, c. 1490–91, oil on canvas, mounted on board, transferred from wood, 258.5 × 180 cm, National Gallery; Luca Signorelli, *The Triumph of Chastity: Love Disarmed and Bound* (Three Frescoes from Palazzo del Magnifico, Siena), c. 1509, fresco, detached and mounted on canvas, 125.7 × 133.4 cm, National Gallery.

¹⁰ Julia Cartwright, *Mantegna and Francia* (London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1881), p. 36; Maud Cruttwell, *Luca Signorelli* (London: Bell, 1899).

¹¹ Female viewers were variously criticized for their inattentiveness, sociability, and vanity although similar accusations were occasionally directed at male viewers. See Caroline Palmer, 'Women Writers on Art and Perceptions of the Female Connoisseur, 1780–1860' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2009), pp. 24–50.



Fig. 1: Raphael, *The Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Nicholas of Bari* ('The Ansidei Madonna'), 1505, oil on poplar, 216.8 × 147.6 cm, National Gallery, London. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.



Fig. 2: Hans Holbein the Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ('The Ambassadors'), 1533, oil on oak, 207 × 209.5 cm, National Gallery, London. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

rather than merely passive 'lookers' in galleries.¹² Unfortunately, there is not an actual image of Lee and Cartwright peering at the Holbein and the Signorellis, but it is possible to think of them in the context of this kind of careful examination of objects. Women were present in the gallery, not just wafting through the spaces, but stopping, looking, and studying. Although they were not paid staff, the National Gallery was their workspace. Part of this 'close looking' was about understanding painting methods and

¹² Helen Rees Leahy, *Museum Bodies: The Politics and Practices of Visiting and Viewing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

this was often combined with research. Quite early in her career in 1878, Cartwright writes of such a trip to South Kensington:

I wandered about among my dear Lucas in the Florentine Court and got my ticket and was provided with Symonds' *Renaissance* and Leonardo's *Treatise* which I searched for a mention of Botticelli. Delightfully cool and quiet. I read Eastlake to get up the technical information and puzzled over varnishes. Sadly, I was unable to find the relevant information about Botticelli's *own* method. (*A Bright Remembrance*, ed. by Emanuel, p. 102, emphasis in original)

Cartwright identified a gap in scholarship and would go on to prepare several volumes on Renaissance topics.¹³ But it was another art writer who would take on the task of deciphering Botticelli's method. Christiana Herringham is best known as the founder in 1901, along with art writers Roger Fry, D. S. MacColl, and the first keeper of the Wallace Collection Claude Phillips, of the National Art Collections Fund. This group came together in an effort to save works for the nation.¹⁴

Herringham was also an artist. She was one of many students and artists who used the National Gallery as a space in which to copy works of art.¹⁵ This was considered an important part of academic training. Another lesser-known print version of the Tissot painting includes a woman clutching her artist's portfolio (*Fig. 3*). An *Atalanta* article on 'Students' Day at the National Gallery' of 1890 commented on the preponderance of female students working in the galleries. The author admitted that these included the aforementioned 'overambitious' 'girl-students' as well as professional copyists who copied works for dealers or private clients in order to earn a living.¹⁶ One of the illustrations shows two women in front of the expansive *Ansidei Madonna* (1505), one on a raised seat working away on a canvas while the other stands before her canvas, palette, and paintbox, holding her brush and mahlstick behind her back. It is unclear whether the

¹³ *Mantegna and Francia* (1881); *Beatrice d'Este, Duchess of Milan, 1475–1497: A Study of the Renaissance* (London: Dent, 1899); *Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, 1474–1539: A Study of the Renaissance*, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1903).

¹⁴ *Saved!: 100 Years of the National Art Collections Fund*, ed. by Richard Verdi (London: Hayward Gallery, 2003); Mary Lago, 'Christiana Herringham and the National Art Collections Fund', *Burlington Magazine*, 135 (1993), 202–11; Mary Lago, *Christiana Herringham and the Edwardian Art Scene* (London: Lund Humphries, 1996).

¹⁵ The National Gallery Copyists' Registers record information about admitted copyists. Unfortunately, the registers for this period are missing. See Copyists' Registers 1824–1971, London, National Gallery Archive, NG11. Many thanks to National Gallery archivists for their assistance with this challenge.

¹⁶ J. Penderel Brodhurst, 'Students' Day at the National Gallery', *Atalanta*, January 1890, pp. 234–43. I am grateful to Maria Alambritis for drawing this article to my attention.



Fig. 3: James Tissot, *The Portico of the National Gallery, London*, 1878, etching and drypoint on laid paper, 38 × 21 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

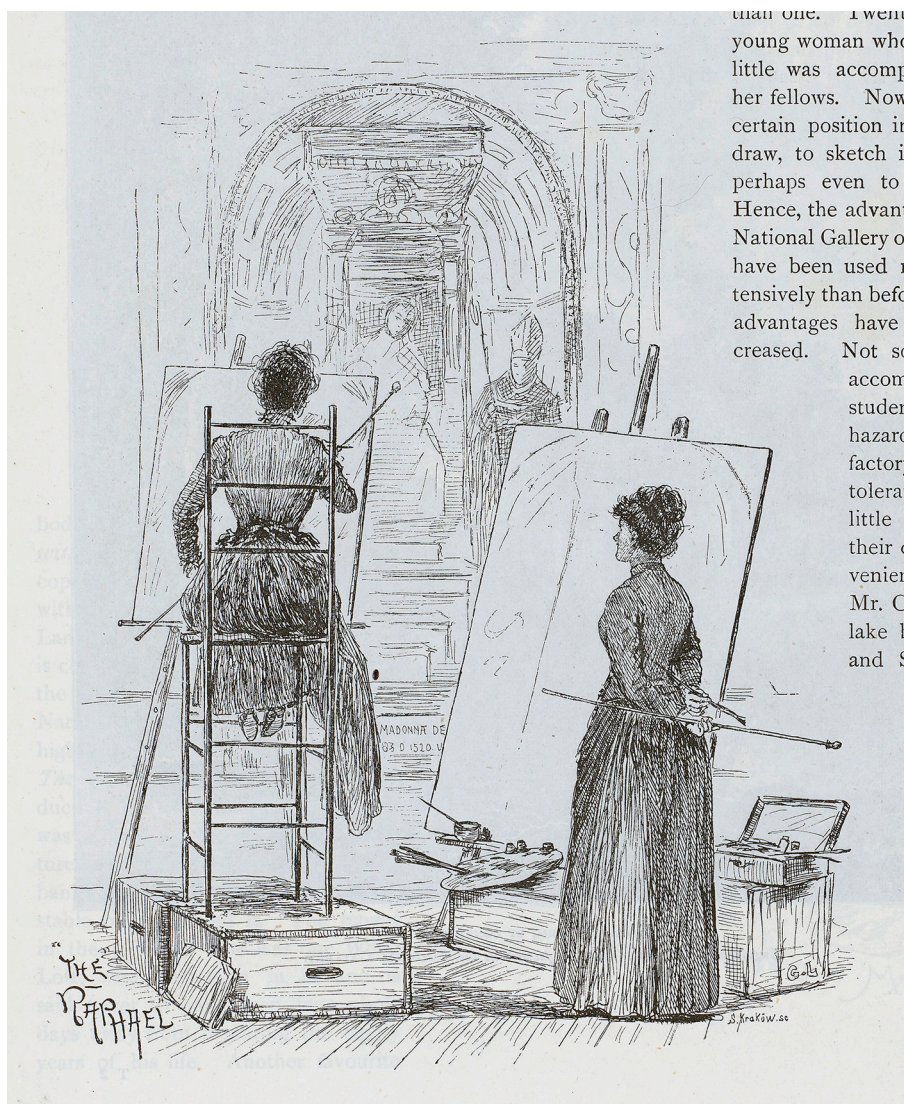


Fig. 4: The 'Raphael', in J. Penderel Brodhurst, 'Students' Day at the National Gallery', *Atalanta*, January 1890, p. 238, National Library of Scotland. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

standing woman is contemplating the other's progress or her next brushstroke (Fig. 4). Copying in the National Gallery was not without its challenges; it was necessary to apply with a sample of work or have a suitable referee. The National Gallery correspondence contains numerous rejections where the work, often submitted by women, was deemed substandard. Nonetheless, if permission was granted students could work on copies

for a period of weeks. Conditions had improved considerably. Charles Locke Eastlake, nephew of the National Gallery's first director, had, in his capacity as keeper at the gallery, introduced rules to regulate the jostling, so that only two artists could work from any one painting at a time. There was a large room where artists' canvases were carefully labelled and stored in racks, and the former porter fees had been abolished. Special measures had also been adopted, such as a special 'chaperone' ticket which admitted the friend of any 'lady student' and conveniences extended to the 'refreshment room'.¹⁷ In 1895 the National Gallery reported 20,359 artists present on Student Days with an attendance of 199 per day and a return of 374 pictures copied of foreign schools and 513 of British and modern schools.¹⁸

Herringham's copies of works by Botticelli hang in the Founder's Building in Royal Holloway, University of London, where the Herringham collection, originally given to Bedford College, now resides.¹⁹ Her library is also now part of Royal Holloway and so she seems doubly present. Her method, like Cartwright's, combined travel and empirical research, but also the production of replicas. Surviving examples of her copies in public collections are also found at Newnham College, Cambridge, Guildford House Gallery, and the Guild of St George, Sheffield.²⁰

One of her copies, now missing from the Royal Holloway collection, is thought to be of a tondo painting that was the first Botticelli bought by Eastlake for the national collection in 1855, *The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel* (c. 1490) (Fig. 5).²¹ As Susanna Avery-Quash points out,

¹⁷ Brodhurst, p. 239; Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World* (London: National Gallery, 2011), pp. 214–15, 219.

¹⁸ National Gallery Report for the Year 1895, National Gallery Archive, NG17/5/185.

¹⁹ Many thanks to College Curator Dr Laura MacCulloch for many discussions on the Herringham collection. See exhibition co-curated by Dr Laura MacCulloch and Michaela Jones, 'Christiana Herringham: Artist, Campaigner, Collector' (Royal Holloway, 14 January–8 March 2019).

²⁰ Herringham's *Study of the Angel Gabriel*, from 'Virgin and Child with Two Angels', after Verrocchio (1881), commissioned by John Ruskin, was included in the bicentenary exhibition, 'John Ruskin: The Power of Seeing' (Two Temple Place, 2019). Ruskin encouraged other women to make copies too; for instance, Octavia Hill, who in 1859 made a copy after Giovanni Bellini's *Portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan* from the National Gallery (also included in the Two Temple Place exhibition), was a tutee of Ruskin's by correspondence — he considered her work 'dainty, delightful and perfect'. Herringham has been credited with challenging Ruskin's assumptions on the prevalence of tempera in early Renaissance paintings (Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, pp. 49–50). Herringham also produced portraiture, landscapes, floral and architectural paintings, and sketches; examples of these were included in the 2019 Royal Holloway exhibition.

²¹ The copy attributed to Herringham in the collection has recently been examined and re-attributed to Elizabeth Nevinson, a later copyist. The whereabouts of the original roundel are unknown (copy of Botticelli, *Madonna and Angels*, National Gallery). Thanks to Laura MacCulloch.



Fig. 5: Workshop of Sandro Botticelli, *The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel*, c. 1490, National Gallery, London. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

this early collecting was patchy, and the work is now considered to be the workshop of Botticelli.²² Herringham's method of producing exact copies of early Renaissance paintings using authentic techniques and tempera — pigment mixed with the medium of egg yolk — had a serious purpose.²³ Following in the footsteps of Mary Merrifield, who had translated Cennino Cennini's *Il libro dell'arte* in 1844, Herringham produced another version of the text that included newly unearthed manuscripts.²⁴ It also included 'Notes on Medieval Art Methods' in which she detailed her own experiments. Tempera was specifically prized for its durability. The failures of mid-Victorian mural projects meant that resilience and longevity remained a concern for contemporary painting.²⁵ At the end of the century tempera was seen as an alternative to the oil used by Van Eyck, but it was a very difficult medium to work in due to its quick-drying nature and techniques such as cross-hatching with a very fine brush.

²² Susanna Avery-Quash, 'Botticelli and Victorian Art Collecting', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, ed. by Mark Evans and Stefan Weppelmann, exhibition catalogue (London: V&A Publishing, 2016), pp. 68–74 (p. 71).

²³ Meaghan Clarke, 'On Tempera and Temperament: Women, Art, and Feeling at the *Fin de Siècle*', 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 23 (2016) <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.767>>.

²⁴ Cennino Cennini, *A Treatise on Painting*, trans. by Mrs Merrifield (London: Lumley, 1844); *The Book of the Art of Cennino Cennini: A Contemporary Practical Treatise on Quattrocento Painting*, trans. by Christiana J. Herringham (London: Allen & Unwin, 1899).

²⁵ This was exemplified in the Houses of Parliament and Oxford Union murals. See Clare A. P. Willsdon, *Mural Painting in Britain 1840–1940: Image and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 50–59, 258–59.

According to the National Gallery Reports the choice of Botticelli was more unusual. Copyists typically preferred to tackle French, Dutch, British, or later Italian works; Botticelli's *Virgin and Child* appears in the final year of the record (1893), when it was reportedly copied four times.²⁶ An illustration of the actual process of copying Botticelli in the gallery can be found in an etching by Joseph Pennell where a woman is perched at an easel sketching before the same tondo.²⁷ Pennell somewhat mockingly titled it the 'Two Madonnas', referring to the Madonna and the bespectacled woman at work, but the sketch might well refer to Herringham or one of her circle. Herringham's 'scientific' method, involving meticulous analysis of individual works of art, also drew on archival research. Among her collaborators in this process was Roger Fry, as well as a number of modern artists who would become identified with a tempera revival.²⁸ They exhibited their work in a show titled 'Modern Painters in Tempera' at Leighton House in 1901, forming the Society of Painters in Tempera later that year. Members gave occasional papers where they exchanged ideas about tempera techniques, and we can place Herringham again in the National Gallery because in 1902 she gave a paper titled 'Methods of Tempera as Exemplified in a Few Pictures in the National Gallery'. She said, 'we scarcely know which pictures are tempera and which are not' and set out to analyse medium and technique.²⁹ She compared two works by Piero della Francesca in the collection and pronounced the *Baptism* as 'undoubtedly tempera' while she doubted this in *The Nativity* (now catalogued as egg and oil, respectively).³⁰

Of Botticelli she said:

As a rule, his large tempera work has a broad, simple fresco-like quality — not attempting much glamour of surface. The *Mars and Venus* is a very good example of this class of work. It is forceful from bold opposition of lights and darks and subtle

²⁶ National Gallery Report for the Year 1893, p. 14, National Gallery Archive, NG17/5/138.

²⁷ Joseph Pennell, *Primitives: Copying Botticelli*, 1891, etching, 17.7 × 12.6 cm, Library of Congress. See also, Mark Evans, 'Joseph Pennell, *Primitives: Copying Botticelli, the National Gallery (The Two Madonnas)*, 1891', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, ed. by Evans and Weppelmann, p. 201.

²⁸ Abbie N. Sprague, 'The British Tempera Revival: A Return to Craftsmanship', *British Art Journal*, 3.3 (2002), 66–74; Hannah Spooner, 'Pure Painting: Joseph Southall, Christiana Herringham and the Tempera Revival', *British Art Journal*, 4.2 (2003), 49–56.

²⁹ Christiana Jane Herringham, 'Methods of Tempera as Exemplified in a Few Pictures in the National Gallery', in *Papers of the Society of Painters in Tempera, 1901–1907* (London: Women's Printing Society, 1907), pp. 23–27 (p. 26).

³⁰ Piero della Francesca, *The Baptism of Christ*, 1450s, egg on poplar, 167 × 116 cm, National Gallery; Piero della Francesca, *The Nativity*, 1470–75, oil on poplar, 124.4 × 122.6 cm, National Gallery.

calculating of the amount of light in the sky and on the lighted surfaces relative to one another. The light falls simply, and the scheme is faithfully adhered to throughout. As in fresco, hatching is used where it is wanted, for broken colour and for modelling form, giving the effect of blending and gradation. ('Methods of Tempera', p. 26)

Her analysis of Fra Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* (c. 1450–53) offers particular insight into her own practice because her copy of the work survives.³¹ She asserted:

Fra Filippo [...] present[s] the work of a man with a singular love for the special capabilities of his material, notably in the bloom-like velvetiness of his drapery colours, and the general penetration with reflected colour. His painting has as much the appearance of a blend as I think is possible in tempera, probably produced largely by their rapid, superimposed washes, a method only really permanent in tempera which does not seem to have the tendency to become more transparent, and lose the value of thin opaque scumbles. ('Methods of Tempera', p. 27)

Clearly her 'I think' is the result of attempts to reproduce the washes and pigments evident in the National Gallery painting, perhaps referring to her copy directly while speaking to the members of the Society of Painters in Tempera. She also highlights the advantages of the method and medium, such as its permanence, over oil. This differentiation was crucial for her group of 'Modern Painters', as well as early Renaissance specialists.

Herringham's analysis of tempera painting was not limited to the National Gallery. She travelled extensively on the Continent and produced travel sketches of architecture and landscape subjects, but she also produced replicas in the collections she visited, such as the two outer figures in Botticelli's *Sacra Conversazione* altarpiece in the Uffizi.³²

In addition to this constant experimentation with tempera technique Herringham contributed to the press. Elsewhere I have discussed some of her contributions to the *Burlington Magazine* where she served on the consultative committee weighing in on debates about the authenticity of the

³¹ Christiana Jane Herringham, *The Annunciation* (copy of Filippo Lippi), 80.5 × 167 cm, Newnham College, University of Cambridge; Fra Filippo Lippi, *The Annunciation*, c. 1450–53, egg tempera on wood, 68.6 × 152.7 cm, National Gallery.

³² Christiana Jane Herringham, *Head of Saint Catherine* (after Sandro Botticelli), c. 1890–97, tempera on panel, 45 × 28.5 cm, Royal Holloway, University of London; Christiana Jane Herringham, *Head of the Magdalene* (after Sandro Botticelli), c. 1890–97, tempera on panel, 45 × 28.5 cm, Royal Holloway, University of London; Botticelli, *Sacra Conversazione* (*Madonna and Child with Saints Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist, Francis, Catherine, Cosmas and Damian*), c. 1470, tempera on panel, 170 × 194 cm, Uffizi, Florence.

National Gallery's new Dürer (now after Dürer) and recent sales.³³ This was a space where Herringham could disseminate her considerable knowledge about the technical aspects of old master paintings. She also played a part in exhibitionary spaces outside the National Gallery, where connoisseurship, collecting, and the market intersected in the early twentieth century.

The Whitechapel Art Gallery

The Whitechapel Art Gallery opened in 1901 as a publicly funded institution with a mandate of delivering 'free exhibitions' for working people to attend.³⁴ Herringham was one of its originary funders/subscribers.³⁵ (The gallery struggled during this early period and required funders in order to survive.) In 1907 and 1908 it held a pair of exhibitions dedicated to old masters and copies. The catalogue explained that the reason for the exhibitions was 'to afford artists and students of art a survey of contemporary methods and technique'; adding,

Hilda, the heroine of Hawthorne's 'Transformation,' 'set up her easel before Domenichino, and *even some of the earlier masters*.' Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement led to copying of the Primitives. Artists whose interest is technique and whose aim is training, do well to copy the colourists — Titian and the Venetians — or the masters of light and impression — Rembrandt and Velasquez. If the aim of the copyist is an end in itself, the careful, minute work of the Primitive artists seems to afford him his best field.³⁶

³³ Meaghan Clarke, "The Greatest Living Critic": Christiana Herringham and the Practice of Connoisseurship', *Visual Resources*, 33 (2017), 94–116. See also, Susan Foister, 'Dürer's Nuremberg Legacy: The Case of the National Gallery Portrait of Dürer's Father', in *Albrecht Dürer and His Legacy: British Museum Occasional Paper*, ed. by Giulia Bartrum, 130 (2006) <<https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/2%20Durer%20Nuremberg%20Legacy.pdf>> [accessed 25 April 2019]; and Helen Rees Leahy, "For Connoisseurs": *The Burlington Magazine* 1903–11', in *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, ed. by Elizabeth Mansfield (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 231–45.

³⁴ Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870–1900: Beauty for the People* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Seth Koven, 'The Whitechapel Picture Exhibitions and the Politics of Seeing', in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, Media & Society, 6 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 22–48.

³⁵ 'W.A.G. Reports' (London, 1901), Whitechapel Archives. Many thanks to Dor Duncan and Whitechapel archivists for their expertise.

³⁶ *Whitechapel Art Gallery: Spring Exhibition, 1908, March 12 to April 26* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1908), p. 7, emphasis in original. The American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*; or, *The Romance of Monte Beni* (1860) was published as *Transformation*; or, *The Romance of Monte Beni* in Britain.

The term ‘copy’ is open to various meanings and can be interpreted as a fake intended to deceive. However, during the nineteenth century making copies of old master paintings was considered a vital part of artistic training. The exhibition ‘Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites’ displayed a partial copy of Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* by John Phillip (1862) that hung in the Diploma Galleries at the Royal Academy from 1868 and would have been seen by artists and students. While it might be surmised that copying an old master was an aspect of artistic practice that remained, like sketches, concealed in the studio, there was in fact a substantial market for copies through tourism, as Jacqueline Musacchio has shown in her discussion of American women copyists working in Florence in the first half of the century.³⁷ Copies were also visible in museums such as the V&A, which lent its copy of Titian’s *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* to the Whitechapel show in 1908; while Frederic Burton, third director of the National Gallery (1874–94), had accepted in 1888 a group of copies after Velázquez by Charles Maloney. The British sculptor and designer Alfred Stevens was known particularly for his reproductions of paintings by Titian and several of his copies were hung in the 1908 Whitechapel exhibition.

There has been a recent surge of interest in the replica as a nineteenth-century phenomenon, as is evident from the exhibitions at the National Gallery (the aforementioned ‘Reflections’) and the V&A (‘Botticelli Reimagined’, 2016). The V&A’s Cast Court, refurbished and reopened with a new Cast Court Interpretation Gallery in 2018, exemplifies the Victorian use of the replica in the museum, and archaeologists have called for a revaluation of replicas as objects in their own right.³⁸ Julie Codell and Linda Hughes argue that nineteenth-century replicas or ‘re-makings’ were not ‘mere copies or imitations; rather they materially provoked the rethinking and re-evaluations of ideas, cultural values, iconographies, and objects’ functions and uses’.³⁹ One of the central roles of the replica was the democratization of knowledge — making it accessible — a function directly alluded to in the Whitechapel catalogue.

³⁷ Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, ‘Infesting the Galleries of Europe: The Copyist Emma Conant Church in Paris and Rome’, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 10.2 (2011) <<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn11/infesting-the-galleries-of-europe-the-copyist-emma-conant-church-in-paris-and-rome>> [accessed 25 April 2019].

³⁸ Sally M. Foster and Neil G. W. Curtis, ‘The Thing about Replicas — Why Historic Replicas Matter’, *European Journal of Archaeology*, 19 (2016), 122–48; Sally M. Foster, ‘Replication of Things: The Case for Composite Biographical Approaches’, in *Replication in the Long Nineteenth Century: Re-Makings and Reproductions*, ed. by Julie Codell and Linda K. Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 23–45.

³⁹ Julie Codell and Linda K. Hughes, ‘Introduction’, in *Replication in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Codell and Hughes, pp. 1–20 (p. 3).

In total the Whitechapel show included just under five hundred paintings. The aim was to show copies of pictures not seen in public collections in London, thereby enabling visitors to travel beyond the rooms of the National Gallery. The professional significance of the exhibition was demonstrated by the inclusion of several works by key figures in museums, including Sir Charles Holroyd, who had recently left the Tate to take up the post of director of the National Gallery. He had issued catalogues of the north and central Italian collections and his copies included works by Masaccio and Bellini. Roger Fry, who in 1906 had been appointed curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, lent a copy of a *Narcissus* by Tintoretto. Fry's wife Helen Coombe lent a copy of a portrait by Giovanni Santi. Many of the works that appeared in the exhibition are now lost, and this copy does not seem to have survived; however, interestingly, the only copy by Coombe in public collections is yet another version of the National Gallery's tondo (*The Virgin and Child with Saint John and an Angel* (after Sandro Botticelli), Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry). While neither Coombe nor Herringham were curators of public institutions, their practice, moving between the National Gallery and Italy seeking out early Renaissance paintings to copy, indicated shared professional interests and knowledges.

Another contribution to the Whitechapel exhibition was a copy of Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni*, by Louisa (Wilkinson) Garrett (Mrs L. M. Garrett), lent by Millicent Garrett Fawcett. The Ghirlandaio had hung in the National Gallery on loan from 1888 until 1896.⁴⁰ Garrett had first exhibited her copy of the piece in the 'Woman's Work' section of the 1897 'Victorian Era' exhibition. Therefore, she, like Cartwright and Lee, had spent considerable time in the National Gallery during the 1890s. This copy had unique significance because the owner, Henry Willett of Brighton, had withdrawn Ghirlandaio's painting from the National Gallery in 1896 in order to sell it. The Whitechapel catalogue signalled the value of the copy by highlighting this history: 'the original of this picture was for some time exhibited in the National Gallery. From the Kann Collection it has passed to America' (pp. 17–18). The Ghirlandaio had been acquired by the French collector Rodolphe Kann (1845–1905) and the loss of the 'exquisite' work and resulting gap in the national collection had continued to exercise critics.⁴¹ Kann's collection was sold in 1907 and the Ghirlandaio was subsequently acquired by the American financier

⁴⁰ National Gallery Report for the Year 1896, p. 5, National Gallery Archive, NG17/5/191; Miss L. Wilkinson [Louisa Garrett], copy of Ghirlandaio, *Portrait*, in *Victorian Era Exhibition, 1897: Women's Work Section*, exhibition catalogue (London: Riddle & Couchman, 1897), p. 82.

⁴¹ A. Cameron Taylor, 'The Locko Park Gallery, Derbyshire', *Connoisseur*, 7 (1903), 88–91 (p. 89).

J. Pierpont Morgan.⁴² By 1908 there was widespread concern about the exodus of British collections to America.⁴³ The catalogue made clear that the original work had left the country and the only way that gallery visitors could ever experience Ghirlandaio's painting was through the display of Louisa Garrett's copy in Whitechapel.

Emily Sargent, the sister of John Singer Sargent, was a prolific artist and she lent her own copies of various pictures in Italian collections.⁴⁴ (Her surviving watercolours and a photograph demonstrate that she also spent considerable time copying in the National Gallery.) Not all the works in the show were Italian. Mary McEvoy had established a reputation as an artist working in the style of seventeenth-century Dutch painting. The *Athenaeum* particularly praised the 'technical complexity' of her copy after Vermeer which achieved near perfection.⁴⁵ McEvoy's *Interior: Girl Reading* (1901) is reminiscent of a Dutch interior and indicates her engagement with works from the period. Copying would continue to be part of her artistic practice; her name appears in the National Gallery copy books in 1902 and 1910.⁴⁶ There was also a section of the display dedicated to copies of Velázquez; just as John Phillip had done in 1862, artists attempted to replicate his work in Madrid. These included artists, such as John Singer Sargent, John Lavery, and Ethel Walker, whose names also appeared in the National Gallery copy registers as referees or, in the case of Walker, as a copyist. Velázquez had achieved cult status at the turn of the twentieth century and was often cited in relation to contemporary artists such as Sargent.⁴⁷

The National Gallery had a long history of engagement with photography and reproductions of paintings were now widely accessible.⁴⁸ Several photographers in London, such as H. H. Cameron and Frederick Hollyer, had achieved considerable success creating fine art reproductions and this

⁴² Jean Strouse, 'J. Pierpont Morgan: Financier and Collector', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s., 57.3 (2000), 1–64 (p. 31). The work entered the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection in 1935.

⁴³ On the outcry over the American dispersal of the Kann collection, see Flaminia Gennari Santori, *The Melancholy of Masterpieces: Old Master Paintings in America, 1900–1914* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2003), p. 89; see also, *British Models of Art Collecting and the American Response: Reflections across the Pond*, ed. by Inge Reist (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

⁴⁴ Many thanks to Richard Ormond for his kind assistance with tracing Emily Sargent.

⁴⁵ 'The Spring Exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery', *Athenaeum*, 21 March 1908, pp. 361–62 (p. 361).

⁴⁶ Copyists' Registers 1824–1971, National Gallery Archive, NG11/2.

⁴⁷ Kenneth McConkey, 'The Theology of Painting: The Cult of Velázquez and British Art at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 6.2 (2005), 189–205.

⁴⁸ Anthony Hamber, 'A Higher Branch of the Art': *Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839–1880*, Documenting the Image, 4 (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996), pp. 333–62.

was also true in Italy.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the exhibition aimed to underline the importance of painted ‘copies’ of old masters. Writing in the *Saturday Review*, the critic Laurence Binyon declared:

We are so deluged nowadays with photographs and reproductions that we forget how much value there may be in a good copy, simply as a translation from some great original; but there is another side of interest in the copies made by one master after another master [...]. At Whitechapel we have [...] Herringham’s patient copies, quite exquisite in their fidelity as in their quality, after Botticelli and other early Italians.⁵⁰

The review emphasized the ‘value’ of ‘translations’ and the ‘exquisite’ accuracy and ‘quality’ of Herringham’s copies. Binyon was referring to Herringham’s copy after Botticelli of the *Madonna of the Book* from the Poldi Pezzoli Collection, Milan (Figs. 6, 7). Thus, expertise and understanding of techniques deployed by Botticelli could only be fully understood through exact replication.

Of the four works by Herringham shown, one other survives: a copy of the Madonna (after Cosmè Tura, Accademia Venice), a work at the time still in her own collection and now at Royal Holloway.⁵¹ Another work, which does not survive, was a copy of Botticelli’s fresco *Venus and the Three Graces Presenting Gifts to a Young Woman* from the Villa Lemmi that had been taken to the Louvre. The Whitechapel catalogue revealed that the figure in the red cap in the original fresco had been damaged and Herringham had in her own painting provided a ‘suggested restoration’ of the original composition (p. 25). The work points to her confidence in reproducing Botticelli’s technique and style, but it also suggests something else that copies offer — an ‘imagined’ restoration as opposed to an actual one, thereby translating, but not damaging the original work of art. Herringham was a member of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings and a strong proponent of conservation as opposed to restoration. The reference to ‘photographs’ in Binyon’s review adumbrated the troubles of Herringham’s subsequent and final translation project, the cave paintings at Ajanta in India, undertaken with a team of artists and displayed at the

⁴⁹ Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, ‘The Photograph and Bernard Berenson: The Story of a Collection’, *Visual Resources*, 26 (2010), 289–303.

⁵⁰ Laurence Binyon, ‘In Bond Street and Whitechapel’, *Saturday Review*, 11 April 1908, pp. 463–64.

⁵¹ Cosmè Tura, *Madonna con Bambino detta Madonna dello Zodiaco* (‘Madonna of the Zodiac’), 61 × 41 cm <<http://www.gallerieaccademia.it/madonna-con-bambino-detta-madonna-dello-zodiaco>> [accessed 25 April 2019]. Herringham’s copy (c. 1896–1908), in a frame identical to the original, was conserved for the Herringham exhibition at Royal Holloway in 2019.



Fig. 6: Christiana Jane Herringham, *Madonna and Child* (after Sandro Botticelli), Guildford House Gallery. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Guildford Borough Council.



Fig. 7: Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna of the Book*, c. 1480, tempera on panel, 58 × 39.5 cm, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan.

Sydenham Palace in 1911.⁵² As Sarah Victoria Turner has recently noted, the Ajanta copies were displayed above Victor Goloubew's photographs of the same caves.⁵³ Afterwards, ill health, seemingly resulting from anxiety about Goloubew's analogous Ajanta project, ended Herringham's career. However, at Whitechapel in 1908, the paintings still had the upper hand and the show emphasized the continued relevance of the replica for a variety of reasons: artistic training, technical understanding, modelling, restoration, and as a record of 'lost' works.

The exhibition of copies of old masters coincided with the dissemination of Herringham's earlier lecture on the technical analysis of the National Gallery paintings through its publication by the Women's Printing Society. The choice of publisher discloses that the revival in tempera intersected with contemporary gender politics; this confluence was evident in the gallery. The Whitechapel Art Gallery, intended as a space for working-class culture, was also a space for women. Susan David Bernstein traces semblances between the British Museum Reading Room and the East End People's Palace; she sees these 'as heterotopic spaces of uncertain transition and radical possibilities'. 'The networked communities in [the] public reading rooms of [both spaces] [...] fostered opportunities for middle-class women.'⁵⁴ It can be argued that the spaces of the National Gallery and Whitechapel Gallery functioned similarly. The prevalence of women at Whitechapel is notable. Records indicate that one of their roles was delivering public lectures. Whitechapel Gallery Reports for 1908 touted its success in reaching three million visitors in the eight years since it had opened. In addition, they claimed '2600 children from area schools visited in the mornings and wrote a short essay on their impressions after

⁵² Christiana J. Herringham, 'The Frescos of Ajantà', *Burlington Magazine*, 17 (1910), 136–39; *Ajanta Frescoes: Being Reproductions in Colour and Monochrome of Frescoes in Some of the Caves at Ajanta after Copies Taken in the Years 1909–1911 by Lady Herringham and her Assistants* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915); Rupert Richard Arrow-smith, "An Indian Renaissance" and the Rise of Global Modernism: William Rothenstein in India, 1910–11', *Burlington Magazine*, 152 (2010), 228–35; Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, pp. 144–229.

⁵³ Herringham's Ajanta copies were similarly intended as a learning experience for students. She expressed discomfort with the 'Imperial' Festival at Sydenham and her interest in Ajanta was linked to the politics of Indian artistic and cultural revival. See Lago, *Christiana Herringham*, pp. 221–23; Sarah Victoria Turner, 'From Ajanta to Sydenham: "Indian" Art at the Sydenham Palace', in *After 1851: The Material and Visual Cultures of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham*, ed. by Kate Nichols and Sarah Victoria Turner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 122–42 (pp. 138–39). Thanks to Sarah Victoria Turner for many discussions about Herringham's Ajanta project and copies as translations.

⁵⁴ 'Reading Room Geographies', pp. 25, 21. Bernstein notes that stubborn class barriers were retained in accounts of relations between librarians and working-class patrons and the same failures have been noted in relation to the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

a short lecture and being guided around the exhibition'.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, neither the lectures nor the essays remain in the archive, but the report offers clues about the ways in which aspects of gallery work now labelled education and outreach in the process offered women independence as well as access to cultural networks. Rosabel Watson, who arranged the musical performances that accompanied the 1908 exhibition, would become active in the suffrage movement.⁵⁶ Overlapping networks of art, social reform, and suffrage activism were also evident in the exhibitors. Garrett was part of the Garrett circle of independent women who participated in a diversity of cultural and political organizations; along with Herringham and her sister Fanny Wilkinson, the first professional woman garden designer, she had been on the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage.⁵⁷ Kate Hill has recently argued that in spite of the professionalization of museums at the end of the century, modernity offered possibilities for women.⁵⁸ The Whitechapel show, combining connoisseurial knowledge of 'copies' and cultural philanthropy, exemplifies this pattern. The display of copies of old masters in the gallery reveals overlapping pedagogic and political interests.

The premise of the Whitechapel exhibitions was taken up two decades later by Roger Fry, who staged an 'Exhibition of Copies and Translations' of old master paintings at the Omega Workshops in Fitzroy Square. These 'translations', done in oil on canvas rather than tempera on panel, are visible today at Charleston farmhouse, the home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. Richard Howells has recently asked why the Bloomsbury Group made old master copies, but also why they went on to exhibit them and offer them for sale. He suggests the answer lies in a confluence of causes related to Fry the painter, connoisseur, and curator, and the two-way relationship between the early Italians and the post-Impressionists in Fry's

⁵⁵ Whitechapel Art Gallery Report 1908, p. 5, Whitechapel Archive.

⁵⁶ Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870–1914: Encroaching on All Man's Privileges* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 60–62.

⁵⁷ Many thanks to Elizabeth Crawford for her help in tracking Garrett. See Elizabeth Crawford, *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and their Circle* (London: Boutle, 2002), pp. 162, 253. In 1907 and 1908 Herringham was involved in the Women's Guild of Arts and the Artist's Suffrage League. See Zoë Thomas, "I loathe the thought of suffrage sex wars being brought into it": Institutional Conservatism in Early Twentieth-Century Women's Art Organizations', in *Suffrage and the Arts: Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise*, ed. by Miranda Garrett and Zoë Thomas (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 23–42 (pp. 30–32). Annie Swynnerton was another member of this circle and it was Garrett who bequeathed several of Swynnerton's paintings to the Manchester Art Gallery in 1936. Thanks to Rebecca Milner (curator of Fine Art at Manchester Art Gallery) and Katie Herrington, co-curators of the exhibition 'Annie Swynnerton: Painting Light and Hope' (Manchester Art Gallery, 2018–19).

⁵⁸ Kate Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850–1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

aesthetic.⁵⁹ Herringham was of course absent from the Omega Workshops' show due to her illness (although she did not die until 1929), but this later incarnation of copies of old masters might also be seen as a continuation of her earlier contribution and a shared intellectual and exhibitionary history.

In the late nineteenth century the convergence of connoisseurship and empiricism enabled several women to stake a claim for themselves as professional art writers. Women, such as Cartwright and Lee, frequented the heterotopic space of the National Gallery. Contemporary accounts of the National Gallery also suggest that it was akin to an artist's workshop, one that was dominated by women. Copying facilitated meetings for women artists, but also careful looking and re-evaluation of art objects. As part of the early *Burlington* circle, women contributed to the formation of a discipline that still lacked an institutional affiliation. Herringham was one of several women in this group, disseminating her technical expertise through art writing and exhibitions. By exhibiting her paintings at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, she was upholding the goals of a museum she supported financially. Crucially, the exhibition at Whitechapel emphasized the copy as an 'end unto itself', thereby giving value to the work exhibited by both male and female artists. The show also revealed overlapping networks of women copyists who regularly occupied the galleries of the national and international collections; several were already interweaving with political debate about the rights of women. Cultural philanthropy was one avenue for public involvement and a forum for the dissemination of knowledge about art to East End communities and schoolchildren. The National Gallery and the Whitechapel, although very different institutions, were both occupied by women. Their use as workshops and exhibition spaces point to the continued role of women as collaborators and instigators in replicating, defining, and rethinking the 'masterpiece' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁵⁹ Richard Howells, 'Copies and Translations: Roger Fry, Old Masters and the Omega Workshops', *British Art Journal*, 16.1 (2015), 47–57.